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ABSTRACT

Health, education, and human service agencies are beginning to think strategically and systematically about how to provide family members with opportunities for meaningful involvement as partners. Noting that collaboration between families and professionals in program and policy settings requires all parties to acquire new skills, this guide for group facilitators provides experiential exercises to help family members and professionals forge new relationships and formulate new ideas for future work together. Activities for this 3-hour group meeting use a variety of learning formats, including brainstorming, individual reflection, large and small group discussion, and case study analysis. The guide provides information on the recommended group size, trainer or facilitator qualifications, materials needed, ways to modify the training, and information on additional resources. Also included are extensive notes for trainers or facilitators, a sample meeting agenda, activity instructions and materials needed, and handouts. (KB)

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Facilitators' Guide to Group Discussion
3-Hour Version

Making Room At The Table

Fostering Family Involvement in the Planning and Governance of Formal Support Systems

Produced jointly by the STATES Initiative of the Family Resource Coalition of America and the Institute for Family-Centered Care

Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

By Elizabeth Jeppson, Josie Thomas, Anthony Markward, JoAnne Kelly, Gail Koser, and David Diehl

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Cover photo © 1997 Stephen Shames/Matrix. Pictured is Tina Tufaga, former participant in Parents and Children Together (Honolulu, Hawaii), who now teaches part-time at the preschool attended by her two children and attends college. This photo is part of *Pursuing the Dream: What Helps Children and Their Families Succeed*, a photo book and public education campaign showing how families are transforming their lives through community-based family support programs. For more information on how to get involved, contact the Family Resource Coalition of America: 312/338-0900.

Overview Of The Facilitator's Guide

PARTICIPANTS IN THIS SESSION will explore ways of making room at the table for families to be involved in the planning and governance of formal systems of services and support. The session can be facilitated by trainers, facilitators, group leaders, and others who are committed to increasing family members' roles in program and policy development, community building, and leadership activities; it is intended to be co-facilitated by a family member and a professional. *Making Room at the Table* includes activities designed to promote greater understanding and knowledge of family involvement. These activities can be used with a variety of audiences at both the state and local levels.

Collaboration between families and professionals in program and policy settings is an exciting concept that requires all parties to acquire new skills. It is hoped that the experiential exercises described in this guide will help participating family members and professionals forge new relationships and formulate new ideas for future work together.

This facilitator's guide is a product of the STATES Initiative, a project of the Family Resource Coalition of America funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and a joint effort of the Family Resource Coalition and the Institute for Family Centered Care. The STATES Initiative is providing eight selected states with training and intensive technical assistance in developing services, programs, and policies that reflect a family support approach and actively involve families. Among the thirty-six states that initially applied for participation in the STATES Initiative, the most requested technical assistance topic was family involvement.

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Training Summary & Requirements

PURPOSE: This guide provides trainers and facilitators with some tools to:

- Explore conceptually and practically how families can become involved in service design and delivery, policy development, community building, leadership training, and other elements of the formal system of supports for children and families.
- Create a shared understanding among professionals and family members of the potential barriers to and practices that support family involvement within formal support settings for children and families.
- Provide a context for envisioning and promoting greater family involvement activities and strategies.

FORMAT: Participants will be offered a variety of learning formats, including:

- Warm up exercises
- Brainstorming
- Individual reflection
- Large and small group discussion
- Case study analysis
- Presentations of examples from the field

LENGTH OF SESSION: 3 hours

TRAINEES: Trainees may include family members, state government staff, service providers, and community representatives.

SESSION SIZE: A session should include 25 to 30 participants, 50% of whom should be family members who represent the perspective of families participating in and/or receiving services at the program and policy levels.

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TRAINERS OR FACILITATORS: Training sessions should be co-facilitated by at least one family member (as described above) and one or more professional trainers or facilitators. Co-facilitation with family members models collaborative relationships and helps to create an environment in which all contributions are acknowledged and respected.

The trainers or facilitators should be:

- Committed to advancing the concepts of family involvement at all levels
- Knowledgeable of and experienced with issues relevant to family involvement
- Skilled in facilitation or training activities
- Experienced and having participated in a similar training so that they possess a clear understanding of its message and purpose

MATERIALS: Handouts and Overheads are grouped at the end of this guide. Other required materials are listed at the beginning of each section.

MODIFICATION OF TRAINING: Trainers are strongly encouraged to modify this training to meet their individual needs. Order, length, and organization can all vary as long as the essential commitment to family involvment is still communicated through the training. A longer 6-hour version of the training is available from the Family Resource Coalition of America.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Trainers are strongly encouraged to read *Essential Allies: Families As Advisors* and *Words of Advice*, two publications of the Institute for Family-Centered Care, and *Guidelines for Family Support Practice*, a publication of the Family Resource Coalition, before conducting a session.

Notes For Trainers & Facilitators

Background on Family Involvement in Formal Support Settings

Family members, direct service providers, and policymakers are beginning to regard each other as equal partners in a shared endeavor to change the formal system of services for children and families. This new paradigm—the paradigm of partnership—is spreading across the country. Human service professionals have begun to recognize that family members (by virtue of their expertise and experiences) and agencies concerned with children and families (in light of their mission) are partners of necessity. As the attitudes of professionals change, family members are beginning to find more opportunities to shape organizations and systems through policy making and program development. Health, education, and human service agencies need to think more strategically and systematically about how to provide family members with opportunities for meaningful involvement.

Families, service providers, and policymakers around the country have expressed excitement about increasingly collaborative parent/professional relationships and describe the positive changes that can and do occur when family members and professionals work together.

Many states have worked to support and strengthen the voices of "consumers" and program participants, offering opportunities for family members to assist in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services at the state and local levels. At the same time, consumer groups have worked hard to gain a seat at the policy table. Many of the current opportunities for families to become involved in policy making originated through systems of service for developmentally disabled populations and families of children with special health care needs. Head Start parents have been involved in program planning and decision making since its inception over 30 years ago. Educational systems, too, have recognized the importance of parental involvement in achieving long-term academic success, positive behavior and attitudes, and reduction of drop-out rates. Within community-based grassroots movements, parents and other family members have successfully mobilized their peers to make their voices heard by professionals.

Many efforts are being made to broaden the impact of family members on the attitudes and actions of policymakers and on the policies and practices of state and local government, local programs, local collaborative bodies, and training and support initiatives for families and professionals. There is growing recognition that systems change cannot be left to a handful of researchers, practitioners, or reform-minded state agency staff members. The "devolution" of powers from federal to state government and from state government to municipal and regional entities is both a reflection of and a vehicle for the new paradigm of partnership.

Many human service professionals and consumers have acknowledged that family involvement is a significant component of a family support agenda. States across the

nation have indicated that developing effective strategies for involving families is of paramount importance to their reform agendas. The new paradigm benefits not only each segment of the human services system, but the system as a whole. Effective family involvement makes the system more responsive, more cost-effective, more culturally sensitive, and more coordinated. However, there are still many questions—from state policymakers, members of collaborative bodies, community-based programs, and individual family members—about how this paradigm can be implemented in individual organizations and neighborhoods, let alone suffuse the human service system. This training will help participants begin to answer those questions together.

Approach to the Training

With any endeavor, there is sometimes a gap between the desire to work in a new way and actual implementation. Experience has shown that critical reflection and honest dialogue about the benefits and challenges of this new concept of partnership are the most effective strategies for bridging that gap. It is important, therefore, to allow participants to fully explore the issues presented in each component of this training. If time is limited, it is preferable to spread the training over several days, rather than to shorten any of the sections substantially.

It is essential that facilitators create an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable exploring the concepts presented in this training session. Be sure to plan adequate time for introductions, and make use of one of the suggested "ice-breakers" to increase the spirit of informality and sharing. The first two activities—"Understanding Partnerships" and "What Is a Family"—will help participants experience the content on a more personal level and increase their feeling of camaraderie and their investment in the training. While the "family" exercise may produce significant differences of opinion, it will also demonstrate that all perspectives are welcomed and valued. Remember that the point is not to get everyone to agree on all the issues, but rather to have an open dialogue in an atmosphere of collegiality and respect.

Sample Agenda: 3 Hour Version

1 35 MINUTES **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
Facilitators will welcome participants; provide a brief overview of the day; provide an opportunity for full group introductions; review the family support principles; and hear from the parents/facilitators on their personal histories.

2 30 MINUTES **UNDERSTANDING PARTNERSHIPS: THE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION**
Participants will explore the elements that contribute to building effective partnerships.

3 5 MINUTES **WHAT IS A FAMILY?**
Facilitators will provide definitions of family and share with the group.

4 30 MINUTES **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?**
Facilitators will provide a definition of family involvement and the group will explore the diversity of opportunities and roles for family members; facilitators will give examples of various roles and ask the audience to share their own experiences.

5

OPTION A
30 MINUTES **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: BENEFITS AND BARRIERS**
Participants will identify the benefits of family involvement (for consumers, programs, and communities) and will discuss the barriers to effective family involvement in programs and policies.

OPTION B
30 MINUTES **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR ORGANIZATIONS**
The group will complete a self-assessment process that helps identify areas of strength, areas of need, and provides the foundation for discussions of future work.

Note on Optional Sections: *In most instances, the facilitators should choose either OPTION A (Benefits and Barriers) or OPTION B (Self-Assessment) described above.*

In general, OPTION A is more suited to groups who are fairly new to family involvement, or who need more help in identifying the reasons for supporting family involvement.

OPTION B is designed for use with relatively advanced groups who are already doing some family involvement activities, but want to engage in a reflection and planning process to improve their own practices.

6 40 MINUTES **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD**
Working with case studies, participants will identify strategies for overcoming a broad array of challenges to family involvement in policy and program settings.

7 10 MINUTES **WRAP UP**
Facilitators will ask the group to discuss lessons learned and ideas to share and use after the workshop.

Materials Needed For The Training

Agendas for the Day

Crayons and Markers

Flip Charts

Masking Tape

Overhead Projector

Overheads/Handouts

White 8 1/2 x 11 drawing paper

1 Welcome & Introductions

PURPOSE: To introduce all participants, review the principles of family support, and provide a real-life example of what family involvement means.

TIME: 35 minutes

MATERIALS: **Overheads/Handouts**
"Family Support Is. . ."
"What Makes Family Support Unique?"

Other materials
Overhead projector

OVERVIEW:

1. Brief introductions (simple introductions; keep it short)

2. Distribute HANDOUTS 1 and 2

3. Show and read OVERHEADS 1 and 2

4. Show OVERHEAD 3

- Discuss the principles of family support, especially as they relate to family involvement. Discuss from funding, policy, and practice perspectives.
- Use the principles to help establish "Why are we here?" (Here are the princ ples we believe in and family involvement is at the heart of these principles.)
  - emphasis on equality and respect
  - work *with*, work *together*
  - families as resources

5. Parent facilitators share their personal journeys
Parents provide their personal perspective, where they have been, what they have done, what works, what they have enjoyed, what they have struggled with, what really motivates them, etc.

Family Support Is

The old approach to big government picking up the pieces of broken families is giving way to the new idea of strengthening families before they break apart . . . In an era of deficit reduction and reduced budgets for social programs, the family support movement is proving that we can save families and money at the same time. We can no longer afford to neglect families at risk. And investing in families is an investment in our future.

— Walter Cronkite, "Our Families, Our Future." PBS

A SET OF BELIEFS AND AN APPROACH to strengthening and empowering families and communities so that they can foster the optimal development of children, youth, and adult family members.

A TYPE OF GRASSROOTS, COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM designed to prevent family problems by strengthening parent-child relationships and providing whatever parents need in order to be good nurturers and providers. These programs have been proliferating across the country since the 1970s.

A SHIFT IN HUMAN SERVICES DELIVERY that encourages public and private agencies to work together and to become more preventive, responsive, flexible, family-focused, strengths-based, and holistic—and thus more effective.

A MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE that urges all of us—policymakers, program providers, parents, employers—to take responsibility for improving the lives of children and families. The family support movement strives to transform our society into caring communities of citizens that put children and families first and that ensure that all children and families get what they need to succeed.

Handout 2

What Makes Family Support Programs Unique?

Programs to support and strengthen families exist in many different communities and settings and provide many different services. Despite this diversity, there is a common thread among all family support programs: a belief in a set of principles that encompass how families should be treated by programs and professionals.

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.
- Families are resources to their own members, other families, programs, and communities.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.

The old approach to big government picking up the pieces of broken families is giving way to the new idea of strengthening families before they break apart. . . In an era of deficit reduction and reduced budgets for social programs, the family support movement is proving that we can save families and money at the same time. We can no longer afford to neglect families at risk. And investing in families is an investment in our future.

— Walter Cronkite, "Our Families, Our Future," PBS

Overhead 1

Overhead 2

Family Support Is

- *A Set Of Beliefs And An Approach*
- *A Type Of Grassroots, Community-Based Program*
- *A Shift In Human Services Delivery*
- *A Movement For Social Change*

What Makes Family Support Programs Unique?

- *Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.*
- *Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.*
- *Families are resources to their own members, other families, programs, and communities.*
- *Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.*
- *Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.*
- *Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.*
- *Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.*
- *Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.*
- *Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.*

Overhead 3

UNDERSTANDING PARTNERSHIPS:

The Elements Of Successful Collaboration

2

PURPOSE: The effective participation of families at the policy and program levels requires a new kind of relationship between families and providers. They must function as equal "partners", and not in the traditional client/provider relationship. This activity provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on the elements of successful partnerships in a spontaneous and unrestricted way.

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS:

Overhead
"Elements of Collaboration"

Other materials
Overhead projector

OVERVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP EXERCISE:

1. Introduction:

- Introduce basic idea of **partnership**
- Divide participants into **pairs** (or small groups, if you prefer).

2. Pairs:

- Ask them to **brainstorm** ideas about relationships and friendships. What makes these relationships work? Identify the elements of successful collaboration. Ask them to be *creative* and *free-flowing* (this is not an academic exercise— it should touch on their most personal experiences with families and friends).
- Allow them to brainstorm within their pairs or small groups for a few minutes.
- **Reconvene the full group**

3. Large Group:

- Ask individuals to **share their brainstorms**; Ask for **examples** from participants on positive collaboration experiences (keep the tone informal as before).
- **Show and discuss OVERHEAD 4.**
  Review group's examples and emphasize the importance of collaboration in fostering effective family involvement.

Elements Of Collaboration

Overhead 4

- *Mutual respect for skills and knowledge*
- *Honest and clear communication*
- *Understanding and empathy*
- *Mutually agreed upon goals*
- *Shared planning and decision making*
- *Open and two-way sharing of information*
- *Accessibility and responsiveness*
- *Joint evaluation of progress*
- *Absence of labeling and blaming*

Source: Focal Point, (1987), Vol. 2, No. 2, Research and Training Center, Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, Portland, OR.

What Is A Family?

3

PURPOSE: This section is designed to briefly introduce the idea of defining family (in an inclusive way).

TIME: 5 minutes or 30 minutes (if using the "Drawing the Family" exercise)

MATERIALS: **Overhead/Handout**
"What Is a Family?"

Other materials
Overhead projector
Drawing paper (optional exercise)
Crayons (optional exercise)

OVERVIEW: **5 minute option**

1. Introduce the subject of "family": In general, there are just a few key ideas to emphasize in this section:

- families are extremely **important** to all of us and have many functions that make them worthwhile
- we are aiming for an **inclusive** definition of family— families come in all shapes and sizes and this is simply a reality of our work;
- how we view families depends on our own experiences and these experiences affect how we work with families (we need to take a step back and look at ourselves).

2. Use OVERHEAD 5 and distribute HANDOUT 3.

3. Summarize (this is basically a repeat of the themes mentioned above):

- All families are different. Families come in all shapes and sizes. Emphasize the diversity of families and the diversity of definitions.
- How we define family is very much based on our own family and our perceptions and experiences.
- The way we view families—whether narrowly or broadly—will shape our working relationships with families.

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Handout 3

What Is A Family?

The unit consisting of parents and their children; persons related by blood or marriage; the group of persons who live in one household and under one head.
—*Webster's Dictionary*

Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multi-generational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof or many. A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, as permanent as forever. We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support. . .A family is a culture unto itself, with different values and unique ways of realizing its dream; together, our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity. . .Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states and nations.
—*Task Force on Young Children & Families, New Mexico Legislature*

Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city.
—*George Burns*

Two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption who reside in the same household.
—*United States Census Bureau*

Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one. You need one because you are human. You didn't come from nowhere. Before you, around you, and presumably after you, too, there are others.
—*Jane Howard*

Four standards for a family: (1) the "exclusivity and longevity of a relationship;" (2) the "level of emotional and financial commitment;" (3) how the couple "conducted their everyday lives and held themselves out to society;" (4) the "reliance placed upon one another for daily services."
—*New York State Supreme Court*

Each family is a unique and self-defining culture with a language, a style, and rhythm unlike any other.
—*J. Freeman*

A family is group of people who make an irrational commitment to each other's well being to the point of making each other crazy.
—*Urie Bronfenbrenner*

He that has no fools, knaves, nor beggars in his family was begot by a flash of lightening.
—*Thomas Fuller (seventeenth century clergyman)*

Ward, I'm very worried about the Beaver.
—*June Cleaver*

Adapted from Barbara Hanft and Josie Thomas, Institute for Family Centered Care.

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Overhead 5

Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multi-generational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof or many. A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, as permanent as forever. We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support. . .A family is a culture unto itself, with different values and unique ways of realizing its dream; together, our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity. . .Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states and nations.

—*Task Force on Young Children & Families, New Mexico Legislature*

OPTIONAL EXERCISE: "DRAWING A FAMILY"

Note: The following optional exercise is especially recommended for groups who may have more difficulty with the purely verbal exercise above. This activity allows people to express themselves in a very personal way that seems to really get at the heart of what families are to all of us. The activity is also colorful and fun. You will, however, need to allocate additional time to the agenda if choosing this exercise.

Introduce the activity and distribute white paper and crayons

Tell the Group:

- "Let's take a few minutes to discover what 'family' means to each of us."

Individual/small group exercise

- Ask the participants to take about five minutes to draw a picture of a family.
- Then ask them to move into small groups (of no more than six people) and review each person's drawing. Ask: What attitudes and values are reflected in their illustrations? How wide do they cast their net in defining "family?"
- It is fun to have each person display his/her drawing by taping it up on the edge of the table facing the rest of the group, so that everyone can see what they have drawn.

Large group discussion

- Bring the group back together and ask for contributions and observations from the small groups. Ask the following questions:
  - What did you learn about how you defined/illustrated family?
  - What surprised you?
  - How might your idea of family be different from or similar to the families you work with?
  - How might these differences or similarities impact your relationships?
  - How do your experiences influence the way you interact with families?

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:

What Does It Really Mean?

4

PURPOSE: Family involvement in program and policy development, implementation, and evaluation can and does take many forms. The purposes of this activity are:

- to touch on a simple, but inclusive definition of "family involvement"
- to place family involvement in the context of the family support movement
- to recognize that family involvement activities should occur at all levels of the service system
- to identify the multiplicity of roles that families can play in shaping the service delivery system
- to understand the importance of creating a range of opportunities for family involvement

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: **Overheads**
"Family Involvement: A Definition"

"Family Involvement Roles Can Be . . ."

"Family Involvement: Roles for Families"

Other materials
Overhead projector

OVERVIEW: **1. Brief Introduction**

- Refer back to "collaboration" and tell them that working in partnership with families is one type of collaboration. Collaboration at all levels, including working with families is increasingly seen as a **best practice** in the field
- Stress families need to be recognized as experts, leaders, and decision makers
- We are focusing on involvement in **programs and policies**

2. Show OVERHEAD 6

- Simply present this as a *starting point* for discussing family involvement. This definition is a work in progress and is not perfect, but allows us to agree on a few essential things (focus on *participating* families, *meaningful* involvement, *breadth* of definition in terms of types of activities recognized)

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Family Involvement In Formal Support Settings:

A Definition

Any role or activity that enables participating families to have direct and meaningful input into and influence on systems, policies, programs, or practices affecting services or community life for children and families.

Overhead 6

3. Show OVERHEAD 7

- Here, we simply want to emphasize the diversity of roles that family members can play. All of these types are appropriate, when they meet the needs of participating families.

4. Show OVERHEAD 8

- Stress that there are many roles for family members. Briefly discuss with participants the variety of roles available to families, and state that all are important. The point is to think very broadly about family involvement and to be creative about finding ways for families to share their expertise.
- Ask the group to provide examples of these roles.
- The following are examples of family involvement efforts as they relate to the nine principles of family support. Facilitators can draw on these examples or use some of their own:

Principle 1: Staff and families work together based on equality and respect
At the Family Connection Site in Augusta, Georgia, parents are consistently asked to help write grants, review proposals and design budgets.

Principle 2: Staff enhance families capacity to support growth and development of all family members
The University of Hartford received a $500,000 grant from the federal government to teach science to Head Start kids in the city of Hartford. One of the first things the University did was to approach a Family Resource Center in Hartford and ask how to engage parents in creating a planning committee. The planning committee was established as an oversight group that advised the University as to the needs of the community. Eventually, members of the planning committee were trained by university staff in group facilitation, new hands-on science techniques, as well as leadership skills. The planning committee was then able to take that training out to over six hundred parents across Connecticut. The parents on the planning committee also offered two summer institutes for families and hired other parents to function as counselors and staff in the institute. The planning committee also formed linkages with the early childhood department at the University to bring family involvement to that discipline of study. Lastly, through that alliance, a number of parents enrolled in the University to undertake a course of study in early childhood education.

Principle 3: Families are resources to their own members and to each other
At a site in Jacksonville, Florida, a three day training, funded by the Annie E. Casey foundation, was offered to community canvassers who were all selected from local housing projects. The canvassers were trained in a variety of topics ranging from listening skills to self defense. The canvassers were then allowed to go out into their respective housing complexes and talk to their neighbors about their needs. The project was extremely successful and many of the canvassers have expressed a desire to receive more extensive training. The results of this program of family leadership training will help in the design of future state-funded programs.

Principle 4: Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities
At the Westside Family Center in St. Paul Minnesota, the director has created a pool of parents to serve as interpreters in Hmomg and Spanish. These interpreters sit in on meetings and work with the center staff, as well as the families to overcome language differences.

Principle 5: Programs are embedded in their communities
The North Hartford Family Resource Center which is located in an elementary school was able to purchase over five thousand dollars of state-of-the-art exercise equipment with monies donated from the Travelers Insurance Company. With the equipment located in the school, a community gym was developed that brought together teachers, parents, community residents and children. This became a real source of community pride and eventually an aerobics class was also developed. At the school-based center, parents could meet and greet teachers in an informal setting to discuss a variety of personal and community issues. The resource center developed a membership form, registered all new parents to the school, put an informational ad in the local weekly newspaper, and distributed t-shirts and offered other incentives for joining.

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Principle 6: Progams advocate with families for services and systems that are fair and responsive
In New Haven, CT., family resource center staff and parents mobilized other parents to create a "Parents Bill of Rights and Responsibilities". This bill of rights contained seven articles including public safety, education, housing, health care, youth development and employment. The parents presented the bill of rights to New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, who signed the bill and used it as a cornerstone for his administration. The bill was displayed throughout New Haven and was used to collect thousands of signatures, including those of state officials, hospital administrators, and local elected officials.

Principle 7: Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources
The New Haven Family Alliance discovered that many families in the area were spending a considerable amount of time on Saturdays at either the hairdressers or barbers. The Alliance, therefore, developed an outreach to barbers and hair dressers as a way to publicize the Family Alliance. The Alliance convened the local barber and hair salon owners for a series of meetings and eventually developed them as public relations offices. The Alliance used the hair shops to show videos and distribute pamphlets on the services available through the Alliance. In addition, the Alliance was able to gather information about the hairdressing industry and possible career paths which they in turn passed on to participating families.

Principle 8: Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging issues
A Family Resource Center in a low income housing project in Baltimore found that using the traditional method of recruiting for parenting classes just did not work. The numbers were extremely low, so they asked a few parents to assist them in designing a new and innovative approach to parenting classes. These parents found out that many of the parents who should actually come to the parenting classes were at home watching soap operas, so they purchased a television set and hosted a daily parenting class using soap operas as a teaching tool. At the end of the soap opera, they discussed issues arising from each episode including human sexuality, family relationships, parenting, self esteem, etc. To aid in recruitment and involvement, the center provided transportation and child care, as well as popcorn.

Principle 9: Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities
The Hartford Foundation, in designing their Brighter Futures Project, decided they wanted parents to play a major role in the design, planning, implementation and administration of the Brighter Futures family centers. After working with a number of existing parent groups, the foundation spent nearly a year training and engaging these parents. In the end, each parent group was awarded $50,000 and given the responsiblity for selecting a local non-profit organization to serve as fiscal agent for the monies. The parents had the task of screening and interviewing potential agencies, gaining information about their history of dealing with families and their vision of family support. This radical approach allowed parents who are usually the ones to be recruited, the opportunity to recruit and cultivate a relationship with an agency. Some of the parents who were involved in this process later went on to become staff and/or advisory committe members to some of the selected agencies.

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Overhead 7

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ROLES CAN BE . . .

- *Formal/Informal*
- *Spontaneous/Planned*
- *Short-term/Long-term*
- *Paid/Volunteer*

Family Involvement:

Roles For Families

- *Members of task forces*
- *Advisory board members*
- *Program evaluators*
- *Co-trainers for preservice or inservice sessions*
- *Paid program staff*
- *Paid program or policy consultants*
- *Mentors for other families*
- *Grant reviewers*
- *Participants in needs assessment process*
- *Reviewers of audiovisual and written materials*
- *Group facilitators*
- *Witnesses at hearings*
- *Community Advocates*
- *Participants in focus groups*
- *Members of committees hiring new staff*
- *Fund raisers*
- *Members of boards of trustees*
- *Participants at conferences and working meetings*
- *Participants in quality improvement initiatives*

Overhead 8

5 Option A

Family Involvement: The Benefits & Barriers

Choose Option A if you plan to use this exercise

In general, OPTION A is recommended for groups who are fairly new to family involvement, or who need to focus on identifying the reasons for increasing family involvement.

5 Option B

Family Involvement: Self-Assessment for Organizations

OPTION B is designed for use with relatively advanced groups who are already doing some family involvement activities, but want to engage in a reflection and planning process to improve their own practices.

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A: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The Benefits & Barriers

PURPOSE: This activity gives participants an opportunity to explore both the benefits and barriers associated with working with families in partnership. The group should discuss the reasons why family involvement is positive, and then articulate all the challenges of working with families in partnership.

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS:

Overhead/Handout
"Family Involvement: The Benefits"
"Family Involvement: Common Barriers"

Other materials
Overhead projector

OVERVIEW:

1. Introduction:

- Briefly explain that they are going to break into small groups to identify the benefits of and barriers to family involvement.

2. Small Group Excercise:

- Divide into 4-5 small groups
- **Benefits:** Please take a few minutes to write down the group's ideas for the following questions:
  - How does having family involvement benefit families?
  - How does it benefit service providers, staff in agencies, or legislators?
  - How does it benefit communities, programs, and agencies?
- **Barriers:** Tell the groups that they should identify and discuss **all** the barriers they can think of to involving families in program and policy development.
- When done, each group is to choose the single most important benefit and the single most challenging barrier.
- Bring full group together.

3. Large group discussion:

- Facilitate group discussion of benefits and barriers, asking each small group for their input.
- Show **OVERHEADS 9-11** and distribute **HANDOUTS 4 and 5**. Comment that these responses have been gathered from previous training sessions. Highlight 1-2 of your "favorite" benefits and barriers.

4. Summary:

- Summarize and point out the advantages of family involvement.
- "As we can see from the lists we've generated, it is hard to work in new ways. Although there are many benefits to involving families in program and policy roles, there are also many barriers. In spite of these barriers, we agreed that it was worth pursuing."

Handout 4

Family Involvement: The Benefits

For Families

- provides opportunity to effect meaningful change
- feels good to make a contribution
- increases confidence in ability to effect change
- makes providers accountable to families
- provides opportunities to network with other families and providers
- builds knowledge and skills
- models community involvement and empowerment for own children and family
- creates less passive recipients of care and services
- makes things better for other families
- opens doors to employment
- creates a sense of belonging
- offers a sense of accomplishment
- increases sense of personal power
- offers leadership role models for other families

For Providers, Staff, Or Legislators

- enhances relationships between families and providers
- enhances providers ability to do their job (e.g.; producing healthier children and families)
- develops providers' knowledge and skills
- increases responsiveness to family-identified needs
- provides a reality check for legislators, providers, and staff
- develops fresh perspective on how services should be delivered
- increases empathy and understanding of families
- shares responsibility
- increases providers' efficiency and cost effectiveness
- helps providers link with other families
- builds an advocacy base
- strengthens accountability from service providers

For Communities, Programs, Or Agencies

- improves quality of programs and services
- increases responsiveness of programs and policies
- keeps programs relevant and realistic
- brings fresh perspectives, creative solutions, limitless creativity
- increases visibility of and respect for program in community
- increases cohesiveness and collaboration between agencies
- helps save $$, reduces waste
- improves ability to accomplish mission
- develops a constituency that can advocate for program/agency
- increases appreciation of various cultures
- contributes to the stability of the community

Family Involvement: The Benefits For Families

- *improves services for own family*
- *provides opportunity to effect meaningful change*
- *feels good to make a contribution*
- *increases confidence in ability to effect change*
- *makes providers accountable to families*
- *provides opportunities to network with other families and providers*
- *builds knowledge and skills*
- *models community involvement and empowerment for own children and family*
- *creates less passive recipients of care and services*
- *makes things better for other families*
- *opens doors to employment*
- *creates a sense of belonging*
- *offers a sense of accomplishment*
- *increases sense of personal power*
- *offers leadership role models for other families*

Overhead 9

Overhead 10

Family Involvement: The Benefits For Providers, Staff, or Legislators

- *enhances relationships between families and providers*
- *enhances providers ability to do their job (e.g.; producing healthier children and families)*
- *develops providers' knowledge and skills*
- *increases responsiveness to family-identified needs*
- *provides a reality check for legislators, providers, and staff*
- *develops fresh perspective on how services should be delivered*
- *increases empathy and understanding of families*
- *shares responsibility*
- *increases providers' efficiency and cost effectiveness*
- *helps providers link with other families*
- *builds an advocacy base*
- *strengthens accountability from service providers*

Family Involvement: The Benefits For Communities, Programs, Or Agencies

- *improves quality of programs and services*
- *increases responsiveness of programs and policies*
- *keeps programs relevant and realistic*
- *brings fresh perspectives, creative solutions, limitless creativity*
- *increases visibility of and respect for program in community*
- *increases cohesiveness and collaboration between agencies*
- *helps save $$, reduces waste*
- *improves ability to accomplish mission*
- *develops a constituency that can advocate for program/agency*
- *increases appreciation of various cultures*
- *contributes to the stability of the community*

Overhead 11

Handout 5

Common Barriers

Attitudes

staff don't feel comfortable talking about issues in front of families

families don't trust the providers

providers think families are too overwhelmed to participate

providers aren't willing to accept families as equals

providers are paternalistic

families think they have nothing to contribute

providers worry that families will violate client confidentiality

Logistics

program can't pay for child care

transportation is unavailable for families to get to meetings

meetings are held only during working hours

families aren't reimbursed for the time they take off of work to attend meetings

System barriers

no system in place for paying consumers

staff time can only be paid during regular working hours

lack of resources available for supporting family involvement

Lack of skills

families have never participated in these types of activities

families are unaware of procedures

providers aren't ready to work with families in new ways

lack of information about roles of families and providers

B: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

5 Self-Assessment For Organizations

PURPOSE: The family involvement self-assessment is designed for use with relatively cohesive groups (i.e., the group will continue to work on family involvement issues after the workshop is over) that are interested in pursuing a concrete plan for improving their family involvement practices. The self-assessment is a tool designed to assist in this process by identifying areas of strength and need. The group undergoes a process of reflection, prioritization, and planning that is the starting point for future family involvement efforts.

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS: **Handout 6**
"Family Involvement Self-Assessment for Organizations"

Other materials
Flip chart paper
Markers
Tape to secure the paper to the wall

Overview:

1. Introduce the idea of the self-assessment and distribute handout 6.

2. Divide into 5 small groups

- Each group will be responsible for answering **two** sections from the self-assessment.
- Assign sections to the 5 groups in this way:
  - **Group 1:** Will answer **sections A and F**
  - **Group 2:** Will answer **sections B and C**
  - **Group 3:** Will answer **sections D and E**
  - **Group 4:** Will answer **sections G and H**
  - **Group 5:** Will answer **sections I and J**
- Tell all participants to **individually** fill out their two sections **(taking 5 minutes)**
- Then, have the small groups come together to discuss their responses to the self-assessment.
- Ask them to discuss the issues, using the questions at the end of the self-assessment (What are your strengths? Needs? Priorities? Strategies?) **(10 minutes)**

3. Bring the group together for a large group discussion (15 minutes):

- Facilitate this discussion focusing on **positive** strategies and ideas for future action.
- Ask for some personal action steps (What are you going to do?)
- Finish on an up-beat note.

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Handout 6

Family Involvement
Self-Assessment for Organizations

Introduction

In recent years, researchers and practitioners in social services and family programs nationwide have increasingly acknowledged the importance of partnerships between community service providers and the families who participate in local programs and services. One of the important ways in which families share in this partnership is through active participation in the decision-making process. In many instances, program participants are taking an increasingly active role in decision-making at the program level, as well as at the local and state collaborative levels.

While these collaborative approaches are enjoying increasing popularity, the reality of working in partnership with families presents challenges for everyone trying to do this ambitious work. As many people have noted, democracy is a messy process, and nobody knows this better than the people on the frontlines who grapple with these issues every day. That is why we went to the field to ask program participants, frontline staff, and administrators about their experiences in forging successful partnerships. The content of this self-assessment is drawn from staff interviews with over 50 individuals representing a variety of perspectives in the human services, most importantly family participants themselves. In this sense, this Self-Assessment is a reflection of the way things should be done based on conversations with those who are trying to do it every day.

Audience

This version of the self-assessment is explicitly designed to address how successfully a given decision-making body (program board, local collaborative, or state-level collaborative) is engaging family members in a partnership relationship for defining policies and making decisions about the program or organization. While it does address many issues of importance for programs more generally, the current version does not address the day-to-day relationship building that is the foundation for partnership at the program level.

Defining "We"

Programs and initiatives often struggle with defining who is and should be involved in their work. Traditional approaches to service delivery have often defined staff as "we" and program participants as "they." As proponents of meaningful family participation in programs and policies, we actively reject this dichotomy.

Any time you read the words "we," "our collaborative," "our initiative," and so on, this is meant to include *both paid staff and participating families*. While family and community involvement efforts often reach out to broader members of the community, it is important not to rely on "community representatives" or "citizens" to represent the unique perspective of program participants. This self-assessment focuses on the active participation and partnership of families who are recipients of services, and who have a unique understanding of their programs, their neighborhoods, and their life situations.

Process

We believe that the group self-assessment process works best when the members of your initiative, *including a substantial number of participants/recipients of services* complete the self-assessment individually, and then discuss the responses as a group (It is optimal when family participants are equally represented in the group so that they feel as comfortable as possible in a potentially intimidating situation). By discussing these important issues, the members of your initiative can move forward in their effort to improve family involvement and maximize the overall quality of your work.

The first step in self-assessment is to honestly and constructively explore the issues and questions surrounding family involvement. In order for this process to be useful to you and your initiative, be frank in your judgments of both strengths and weaknesses. When you are doing well, acknowledge it, and build upon your expertise in that area to improve your overall effort. When you are not doing as well, acknowledge that, and work towards a solution to the more difficult issues. The purpose of this exercise is *not* to grade you or judge your group's effort, but to provide a **basis for reflection and ongoing growth.**

Note for Facilitators: Please emphasize that respondents should pay special attention to the *quality* of the involvement for each question (i.e., they should be doing it *well* in order to respond "Very Much." It is not enough to be simply doing it in a superficial or non-meaningful way). It may also be useful for the facilitator to ask the group the following questions:

1. Who is here today?
2. Who should be here?
3. Are we missing anyone?

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Handout 6

Self-Assessment Statements

How much do each of the following statements describe the quality and level of family involvement in your collaborative or initiative?

	Very Much	Some	Not At All
A. Supporting Involvement			
1. Family and community participants are reimbursed for their time, expenses, and transportation (which is organized and/or provided by the group).	❑	❑	❑
2. We provide or ensure the availability of high-quality, flexible child care that meets the needs of family members, allowing them to participate in meetings and other events.	❑	❑	❑
3. We create opportunities for families to engage in peer networking and support with each other and with staff.	❑	❑	❑
B. Training and Education			
1. We offer training sessions for professionals and families, which are co-facilitated by participants and staff, on how to work collaboratively with each other.	❑	❑	❑
C. Communicating Clearly			
1. We ask for regular feedback from parents about how welcome and comfortable they feel.	❑	❑	❑
2. We make sure that the information we share with families is free of jargon and can be easily understood by all of the participants.	❑	❑	❑
3. Information is provided in all of the languages spoken in our group.	❑	❑	❑
4. We provide relevant information to family participants in a timely manner so that they can prepare for meetings and other events.	❑	❑	❑
D. Support from the Top	❑	❑	❑
1. The quality of family involvement (e.g., intensity and meaningfulness of involvement) is one of our measures of program success for evaluation and monitoring.			
2. Our initiative devotes resources, such as money and staff time, to family involvement.	❑	❑	❑
E. Achieving Appropriate Representation and Recruiting Diversity			
1. We recruit and engage families who have not typically been involved in decision-making or other kinds of family involvement.	❑	❑	❑
2. The program participants who are involved in our effort are representative of the larger community in terms of race, culture, language, income, and education.	❑	❑	❑
3. We have strategies for promoting youth involvement as well as parent involvement, trying to ensure that youth have a stake and a voice in areas important to them.	❑	❑	❑
4. Our initiative involves a variety of community members, including representatives from the business, civic, education, and religious sectors.	❑	❑	❑
5. We are successfully involving males in our initiative.	❑	❑	❑

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Handout 6

	Very Much	Some	Not At All
F. Flexibility and Responsiveness			
1. Our meetings and other opportunities for involvement are offered at times and locations that are convenient for family members.	❑	❑	❑
2. Our initiative responds to the concerns of family members with action.	❑	❑	❑
3. We use needs assessments that have been developed in collaboration with families to ensure that our efforts are addressing the issues that are important to the community.	❑	❑	❑
4. We have a flexible involvement policy that allows family members to determine the level and intensity of their involvement.	❑	❑	❑
G. Going Beyond Meetings			
1. Parents participate in the ongoing evaluation and assessment of our initiative.	❑	❑	❑
2. We provide or make available training on leadership and governance for parents.	❑	❑	❑
3. In our initiative, parents participate as paid staff.	❑	❑	❑
4. We encourage and support parents' involvement in community advocacy and leadership efforts beyond our initiative.	❑	❑	❑

	Very Much	Some	Not At All
H. Setting Goals			
1. Families and staff set specific and attainable goals for involving families in the policy-making and decision-making aspects of our initiative.	❑	❑	❑
2. Family members who are involved have clear roles and expectations.	❑	❑	❑
I. Going Beyond Token Involvement			
1. Family members on decision-making bodies have full voting rights.	❑	❑	❑
2. We have at least as many family members as professionals on decision-making bodies.	❑	❑	❑
3. Participants select their own representatives for decision-making bodies.	❑	❑	❑
4. Families have an equal voice in the most important decisions we make, including hiring staff, setting policy directions, and deciding how to spend money.	❑	❑	❑
J. Changing Organizational Attitudes			
1. Family members trust the relationship they have with the professionals in our organization.	❑	❑	❑
2. In our organization, power is shared equally between parents and professionals.	❑	❑	❑
3. The professionals in our organization respect the opinions of family members and work with families to make these recommendations a reality.	❑	❑	❑

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Handout 6

Using Your Self-Assessment:

After completing the self-assessment, consider some of the following questions as you move onto the next stage of prioritizing which areas you will focus on as you proceed with your plans to improve family involvement in your effort:

Which areas are you struggling in?

What can you do to make improvements in these areas?

What do the families in your community say? Have you utilized their suggestions?

What questions do you need to answer from the parents you involve?

What are your strongest areas?

What has allowed you to improve in these areas?

How can you use these strengths to improve the rest of your effort?

What are your top priorities for action?

What are the next immediate steps you can take?

What is your long-term plan for involving families?

Another resource that may be useful in your ongoing work involving families is **Guidelines for Family Support Practice,** the culmination of years of research on the principles and practices behind supportive work with families. Family involvement and community roles are among the many topics addressed in this resource. *Guidelines for Family Support Practice* can be ordered from the Family Resource Coalition, 20 N. Wacker Dr., Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60606, Ph: 312-338-0900, Fax: 312-338-1522. E-MAIL: frca@frca.org

Please help us improve our work by giving us feedback on this self-assessment!
As part of our ongoing learning process, we are very interested in your impressions of this self-assessment and the ways in which it can be used. If you would like additional input on using the self-assessment, or if you have used the self-assessment and have comments, please contact David Diehl of the Family Resource Coalition of America:

Ph: 304-296-3307, Fax: 304-296-2992.

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FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Where The Rubber Meets The Road

6

PURPOSE: This activity presents realistic situations to which participants can apply newly acquired skills for involving families in policy-making roles. Case studies help participants develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.

TIME: 40 minutes

MATERIALS:

Handout

Case Studies I - III

Other materials

Paper and pencils	Markers
Flip chart	Tape

OVERVIEW:

1. Write the following questions on a FLIP CHART prior to the session.

- What are the strengths in this situation?
- What are the problems?
- What strategies could you use to improve the situation?

2. Introduce basic idea of case studies and distribute HANDOUT 7.

3. Divide into groups for Small Group Exercise

- In order to maximize interaction and avoid a lengthy "report back" time, you can have more than one group analyze the same situation study. When the groups report back, the groups that looked at the same case study can discuss the situation, creating a lively discussion.
- How many studies you use will depend on the size of your group. For example:
  - if you have fewer than 16 people, then 2 groups may be enough;
  - if you have 16-24 people, then 4 groups would be about right; and
  - if you have 25-35 people, then 6 groups would be about right.
- Using these general guidelines, divide the large group into small groups, assigning two groups to each case study you use.
- Ask the participants to read and analyze the studies, answering the questions listed above.

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6

4. Reconvene Into Large Group

- Ask each small group to present its case study and the strategies they would use to overcome the challenges depicted in it.
- After each presentation, lead a discussion asking for feedback about the situation. Some questions you might ask include:
  - How would you have handled this situation?
  - Do you have any other ideas?
  - Is there a Shameka or a Sheri in this group?
  - Are these people or situations familiar to you?
  - What have you learned from this discussion?

5. Summarize

- Highlight the lessons learned from these studies.
- Challenges can be overcome through planning and commitment.

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Case Study 1

Handout 7

Sheri and Shameka

Your community-based health care center is part of a consortium that meets bi-monthly to coordinate activities and share information. The policy of the consortium is that each center must have a consumer and a staff person as representatives. Sheri Harburg, the director of one of the centers, is reluctant to identify a family member from her center to participate in these meetings. She strongly believes that families are too overwhelmed and unprepared to participate effectively. At each meeting, she is openly hostile when the subject is brought up. After some pressure from the other consortium members, she reluctantly asks Ms. Shameka Williams, a young single mother who has a very mild demeanor, to attend the meetings. Shameka is grateful for the help Sheri has provided to her and her son and is willing to do most anything to show her gratitude.

Because Shameka doesn't have a car, Sheri volunteers to drive her to the meetings. Shameka lives near the center so Sheri picks her up on the way to the meetings. She is frequently rushed and arrives late. Shameka doesn't have anyone to watch her young son, Jamal, so she brings him to the meetings where he plays quietly on the floor with his toys and books.

Shameka loves attending the meetings but doesn't understand everything that is discussed. Written materials to help participants prepare for the meetings are sent to each participant prior to the meetings. Shameka's are usually sent to the health center. Sheri gives the materials to Shameka in the car, and Shameka briefly looks them over prior to the meetings. Shameka participates as best she can and thanks Sheri for driving her each time.

After several months, Shameka begins to understand more about the issues. She becomes actively involved in the discussions, contributing valuable information and insights on being a young single mother. Over time, as each meeting approaches, Sheri becomes busier and calls Shameka at the last minute saying she is too busy to come pick her up and that the meetings are in conflict with work she has to do at the health center. After several months, Sheri doesn't call Shameka anymore.

Handout 7

Case Study 2

THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL

The Governor's Council has formed a new 30-member task force to examine issues related to welfare reform in your state. The members of the council represent organizations that provide services to families throughout the state. Because family involvement is a priority for the Governor, the council is mandated to have 20 percent family representation. Arrangements have been made for family members to be reimbursed for all costs associated with participating in the task force, including child care and transportation. Reimbursement checks for these expenses are handled by the staff of the task force.

Most of the professionals appointed to the task force have worked together on other initiatives. Because the Governor wants to make welfare reform an important part of his administration, he has also appointed several high profile state leaders to the task force. To accommodate their schedules, monthly half day meetings will be held in the state. At least once a quarter, the members will participate in a dinner meeting with the full Governor's Council where progress reports and evaluation data are shared. The staff of the task force keep members updated on meeting times and agendas, usually through faxing and phone calls. Much of the business of the task force is conducted by conference call. Staff members for the task force also participate in these phone calls.

The chair of the task force, Dr. Gilman, is charged with selecting the family members to participate. He first selects two family members who are well known as parent activists in the community, Mrs. Guthrie and Mrs. Arnold. Both women serve on a variety of committees and are vocal advocates for women and children in the state. Mrs. Arnold, the wife of a noted physician, is often the chair of the annual charity ball and Mrs. Guthrie is well known for her fundraising activities for the symphony. Although several members of the task force have recommended including family members who have had personal experience with the issues the task force will be addressing, Dr. Gilman is unsuccessful in identifying other participating family members to participate.

Case Study 3

Handout 7

The Job

You work in a community-based family support program that has hired a former client as a parent liaison. The role was created by the director of the program, Wilhemina Jones, as part of a grant she submitted to the federal government. The grant required that the program increase parent involvement. The new position was a total surprise to the staff since they were not involved in writing the grant, designing the role, or in selecting the parent.

The job was not advertised and did not involve a competitive hiring process. Ms. Jones asked Mrs. Ortiz, a client with whom she had a very comfortable relationship to take the position. She was delighted and accepted immediately. The position is for 10 hours per week, Mondays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesdays 5 to 9 p.m., and Thursdays 12 to 2 p.m.

Mrs. Ortiz, who is well liked by the staff, does not have a job description and is unsure what she should do. A staff member, Lyn Allen, asks her to help with family satisfaction surveys, expecting that she will complete the surveys in a few weeks. The surveys require lots of phone contact with family members. Mrs. Ortiz loves making the calls but spends most of the time chatting with families, providing much needed peer support.

After several weeks, Mrs. Ortiz has frequently missed Mondays because of appointments with doctors, school holidays, and therapy sessions. The staff discover that although Mrs. Ortiz is scheduled to work until 9 p.m. on Wednesdays when the program closes, she is leaving at 8 p.m. because her husband objects to her coming home so late.

The staff is concerned about Mrs. Ortiz's declining job performance and approach Ms. Jones, who tells them to handle it themselves because she is very busy writing a grant. They decide to hold a staff meeting to discuss Mrs. Ortiz, but tell her that the meeting is only for professional staff and that she should continue working on the family satisfaction surveys. Mrs. Ortiz knows the meeting is about her and is very upset.

FACILITATORS' GUIDE

Case Studies—Key Issues

Sheri & Shameka

- Sheri's attitude: doesn't believe in consumer involvement; doesn't believe that Shameka is capable of meaningful participation
- relationship between Sheri & Shameka based on dependent relationship
- lack of support for Shameka's role: transportation, child care, stipend
- no orientation to role
- written materials not sent directly to Shameka
- no other families for her to connect to
- no person on committee overseeing consumer involvement
- no process to help Sheri think through her attitudes or learn new skills

THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL

- it is hard to recruit families; the systems and processes make it very difficult for families without significant financial resources to participate
- the make-up of the task force is particularly intimidating for family members
- the length and frequency of the meetings makes it a major commitment for people who work
- having to go to the state capitol is a major barrier
- the staff of the task force may be unprepared to work in collaboration with families
- all these factors make it particularly difficult to recruit families
- Dr. Gilman is inexperienced in working in this way and doesn't know how to go about broadening the pool of consumers
- The consumers on the task force do not have first-hand experience with the issues

THE JOB

- no commitment from director and staff to develop and define the role of parent
- staff not included in decision-making
- basic fair labor practices not in place: advertising the position; interviewing a number of candidates; a written job description; and actual role outlined
- lack of supervision and mentoring
- lack of trust between and among staff and Mrs. Ortiz
- no clear lines of communication and authority
- expectations of performance and attendance were not well communicated
- no support for Mrs. Ortiz
- no thoughtful process for building commitment to the idea of having a family member on staff
- no process in place for working through difficult issues

WRAP UP:

Major Points Of The Day

7

AFTER THE GROUP COMPLETES THE SESSION, it is important to wrap up the training and provide a few parting comments. Frequently, these comments may arise out of the interactions of the day, but in many cases, some more universal remarks will be appropriate. The following are some suggestions for concluding themes to use in wrapping up the training.

- **Collaboration and partnership** between families and service providers is instrumental to success at many levels of program and policy activities. Such collaboration is increasingly recognized as a best practice in the field, and is associated with many positive outcomes and benefits.
- Participating families have **strengths** and a **special perspective and expertise** that can help guide all activities in programs and other initiatives.
- Family involvement opportunities should be **responsive** to the needs and circumstances of families.
- Opportunities should come in a **wide range of roles** and at **all levels** of the service delivery system. Serving on decision-making boards is not enough!
- Any time that parents have opportunities for input, it is most useful to **make sure that their input is meaningful** and **that they have equal representation** at the table.
- In every program or organization activity, we should all ask, "In what ways are we involving families, and **how does this benefit families?**" Can we do better? What do the families say? Have we asked them?
- Finally, this work is both **rewarding** and **challenging.** Change takes time and is a **developmental process.** Make sure that you are always going forward and growing in terms of involving families in the ways they want to be involved.

Note To Trainers:

Slides demonstrating family involvement in action are available for the following programs. To obtain them, contact the Family Resource Coalition of America at 312/338-0900.

ALGEBRA PROJECT, INC.
Cambridge, MA

ASPECTS PROGRAM
Honolulu, HI

AVANCE FAMILY SUPPORT AND EDUCATION PROGRAM
San Antonio, TX

BEDFORD STUYVESANT VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE CORPS
Brooklyn, NY

BRESEE YOUTH
Los Angeles, CA

CASEY COUNTY FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
Liberty, KY

CASEY COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES CENTER
Liberty, KY

CENTER FOR FAMILY LIFE IN SUNSET PARK
Brooklyn, NY

CENTER FOR INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING
Philadelphia, PA

COOPERATIVE HOME CARE ASSOCIATES
Bronx, NY

DENVER FAMILY RESOURCE SCHOOLS
Denver, CO

EARLY EDUCATION SERVICES
Brattleboro, VT

EAST BAY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
Richmond, CA

EXTENDED SCHOOL PROGRAM
Murfressboro, TN

FACE PROGRAM
Cuba, NM

FAMILY FOCUS LAWNDALE
Chicago, IL

FOCUS: HOPE
Detroit, MI

FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM
Portland, ME

FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN
Portland, OR

GIRLS INCORPORATED OF ORANGE COUNTY
Costa Mesa, CA

GOOSE ROCK FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
Manchester, KY

INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY REVITALIZATION
Washington, D.C.

JAMES JORDAN BOYS & GIRLS CLUB AND FAMILY LIFE CENTER
Chicago, IL

JOHN MARSHALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
San Diego, CA

KELLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Portland, OR

MANCHESTER CRAFTSMAN'S GUILD
Pittsburgh, PA

MARSHALL HEIGHTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
Washington, D.C.

O'FARRELL COMMUNITY SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED ACADEMIC STUDIES
San Diego, CA

PACT
PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER
Honolulu, HI

PARENT SERVICES PROJECT
Fairfax, CA

SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT NEIGHBORHOOD POLICING
San Diego, CA

TIERRA WOOLS
Los Ojos, NM

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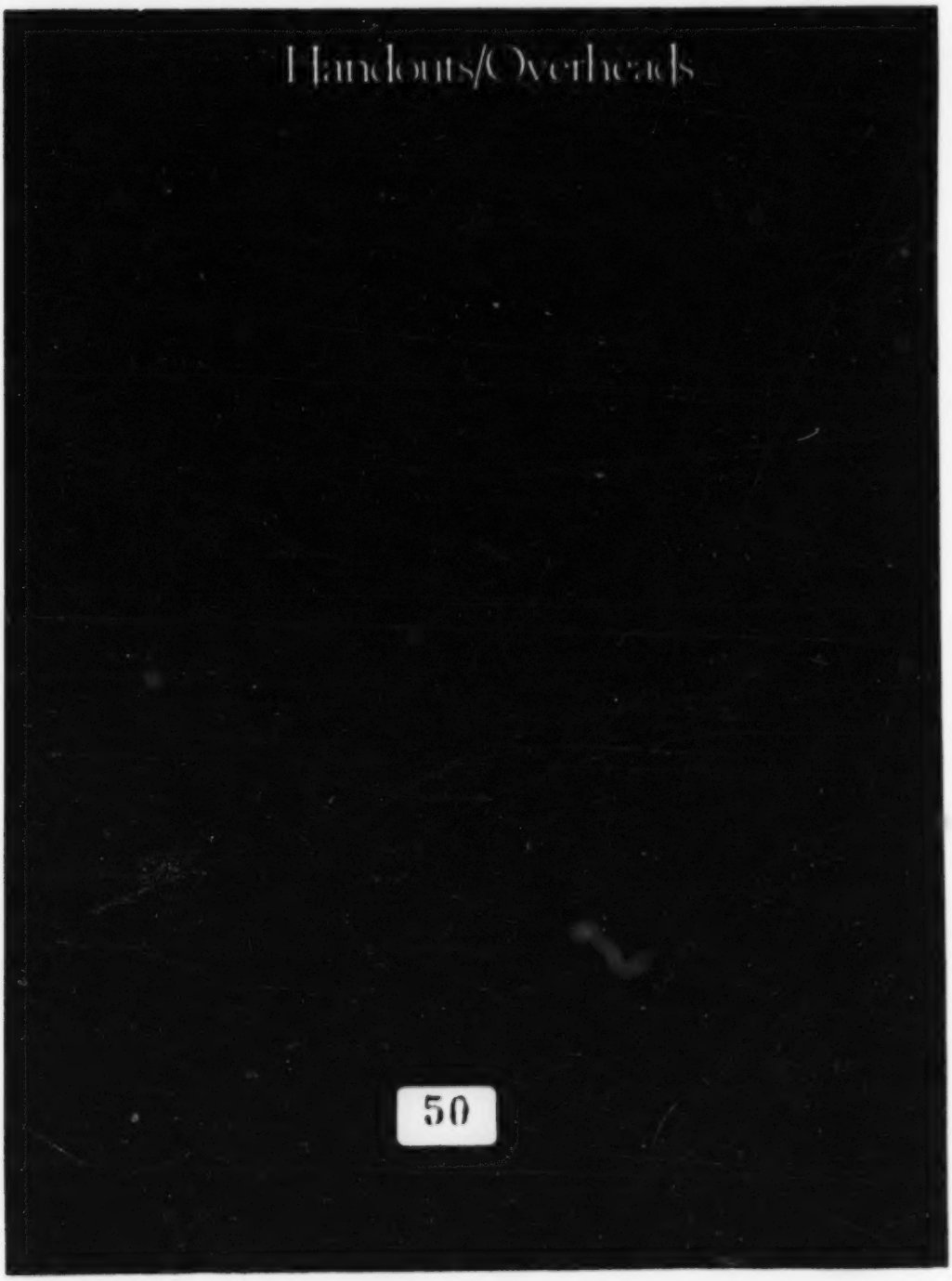

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Handout 1

Family Support Is

A SET OF BELIEFS AND AN APPROACH
to strengthening and empowering families and communities so that they can foster the optimal development of children, youth, and adult family members.

A TYPE OF GRASSROOTS, COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM
designed to prevent family problems by strengthening parent-child relationships and providing whatever parents need in order to be good nurturers and providers. These programs have been proliferating across the country since the 1970s.

A SHIFT IN HUMAN SERVICES DELIVERY
that encourages public and private agencies to work together and to become more preventive, responsive, flexible, family-focused, strengths-based, and holistic—and thus more effective.

A MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
that urges all of us—policymakers, program providers, parents, employers—to take responsibility for improving the lives of children and families. The family support movement strives to transform our society into caring communities of citizens that put children and families first and that ensure that all children and families get what they need to succeed.

The old approach to big government picking up the pieces of broken families is giving way to the new idea of strengthening families before they break apart . . . In an era of deficit reduction and reduced budgets for social programs, the family support movement is proving that we can save families and money at the same time. We can no longer afford to neglect families at risk. And investing in families is an investment in our future.

— Walter Cronkite,
"Our Families, Our Future." PBS

What Makes Family Support Programs Unique?

Programs to support and strengthen families exist in many different communities and settings and provide many different services. Despite this diversity, there is a common thread among all family support programs: a belief in a set of principles that encompass how families should be treated by programs and professionals.

- Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.
- Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.
- Families are resources to their own members, other families, programs, and communities.
- Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.
- Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.
- Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.
- Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.
- Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.

Handout 3

What Is A Family?

The unit consisting of parents and their children; persons related by blood or marriage; the group of persons who live in one household and under one head.
—*Webster's Dictionary*

Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multi-generational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof or many. A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, as permanent as forever. We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support. . .A family is a culture unto itself, with different values and unique ways of realizing its dream; together, our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity. . .Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states and nations.
—*Task Force on Young Children & Families, New Mexico Legislature*

Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city.
—*George Burns*

Two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption who reside in the same household.
—*United States Census Bureau*

Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one. You need one because you are human. You didn't come from nowhere. Before you, around you, and presumably after you, too, there are others.
—*Jane Howard*

Four standards for a family: (1) the "exclusivity and longevity of a relationship;" (2) the "level of emotional and financial commitment;" (3) how the couple "conducted their everyday lives and held themselves out to society;" (4) the "reliance placed upon one another for daily services."
—*New York State Supreme Court*

Each family is a unique and self-defining culture with a language, a style, and rhythm unlike any other.
—*J. Freeman*

A family is group of people who make an irrational commitment to each other's well being to the point of making each other crazy.
—*Urie Bronfenbrenner*

He that has no fools, knaves, nor beggars in his family was begot by a flash of lightening.
—*Thomas Fuller (seventeenth century clergyman)*

Ward, I'm very worried about the Beaver.
—*June Cleaver*

Adapted from Barbara Hanft and Josie Thomas, Institute for Family Centered Care.

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Family Involvement: The Benefits

Handout 4

For Families

- provides opportunity to effect meaningful change
- feels good to make a contribution
- increases confidence in ability to effect change
- makes providers accountable to families
- provides opportunities to network with other families and providers
- builds knowledge and skills
- models community involvement and empowerment for own children and family
- creates less passive recipients of care and services
- makes things better for other families
- opens doors to employment
- creates a sense of belonging
- offers a sense of accomplishment
- increases sense of personal power
- offers leadership role models for other families

For Providers, Staff, Or Legislators

- enhances relationships between families and providers
- enhances providers ability to do their job (e.g.; producing healthier children and families)
- develops providers' knowledge and skills
- increases responsiveness to family-identified needs
- provides a reality check for legislators, providers, and staff
- develops fresh perspective on how services should be delivered
- increases empathy and understanding of families
- shares responsibility
- increases providers' efficiency and cost effectiveness
- helps providers link with other families
- builds an advocacy base
- strengthens accountability from service providers

For Communities, Programs, Or Agencies

- improves quality of programs and services
- increases responsiveness of programs and policies
- keeps programs relevant and realistic
- brings fresh perspectives, creative solutions, limitless creativity
- increases visibility of and respect for program in community
- increases cohesiveness and collaboration between agencies
- helps save $$, reduces waste
- improves ability to accomplish mission
- develops a constituency that can advocate for program/agency
- increases appreciation of various cultures
- contributes to the stability of the community

Handout 5

Common Barriers

Attitudes

staff don't feel comfortable talking about issues in front of families

families don't trust the providers

providers think families are too overwhelmed to participate

providers aren't willing to accept families as equals

providers are paternalistic

families think they have nothing to contribute

providers worry that families will violate client confidentiality

Logistics

program can't pay for child care

transportation is unavailable for families to get to meetings

meetings are held only during working hours

families aren't reimbursed for the time they take off of work to attend meetings

System barriers

no system in place for paying consumers

staff time can only be paid during regular working hours

lack of resources available for supporting family involvement

Lack of skills

families have never participated in these types of activities

families are unaware of procedures

providers aren't ready to work with families in new ways

lack of information about roles of families and providers

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Handout 6

Family Involvement
Self-Assessment for Organizations

Introduction

In recent years, researchers and practitioners in social services and family programs nationwide have increasingly acknowledged the importance of partnerships between community service providers and the families who participate in local programs and services. One of the important ways in which families share in this partnership is through active participation in the decision-making process. In many instances, program participants are taking an increasingly active role in decision making at the program level, as well as at the local and state collaborative levels.

While these collaborative approaches are enjoying increasing popularity, the reality of working in partnership with families presents challenges for everyone trying to do this ambitious work. As many people have noted, democracy is a messy process, and nobody knows this better than the people on the frontlines who grapple with these issues every day. That is why we went to the field to ask program participants, frontline staff, and administrators about their experiences in forging successful partnerships. The content of this self-assessment is drawn from staff interviews with over 50 individuals representing a variety of perspectives in the human services, most importantly family participants themselves. In this sense, this Self-Assessment is a reflection of the way things should be done based on conversations with those who are trying to do it every day.

Audience

This version of the self-assessment is explicitly designed to address how successfully a given decision-making body (program board, local collaborative, or state-level collaborative) is engaging family members in a partnership relationship for defining policies and making decisions about the program or organization. While it does address many issues of importance for programs more generally, the current version does not address the day-to-day relationship building that is the foundation for partnership at the program level.

Defining "We"

Programs and initiatives often struggle with defining who is and should be involved in their work. Traditional approaches to service delivery have often defined staff as "we" and program participants as "they." As proponents of meaningful family participation in programs and policies, we actively reject this dichotomy.

Any time you read the words "we," "our collaborative," "our initiative," and so on, this is meant to include *both paid staff and participating families*. While family and community involvement efforts often reach out to broader members of the community, it is important not to rely on "community representatives" or "citizens" to represent the unique perspective of program participants. This self-assessment focuses on the active participation and partnership of families who are recipients of services, and who have a unique understanding of their programs, their neighborhoods, and their life situations.

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Process

We believe that the group self-assessment process works best when the members of your initiative, *including a substantial number of participants/recipients of services* complete the self-assessment individually, and then discuss the responses as a group (It is optimal when family participants are equally represented in the group so that they feel as comfortable as possible in a potentially intimidating situation). By discussing these important issues, the members of your initiative can move forward in their effort to improve family involvement and maximize the overall quality of your work.

The first step in self-assessment is to honestly and constructively explore the issues and questions surrounding family involvement. In order for this process to be useful to you and your initiative, be frank in your judgments of both strengths and weaknesses. When you are doing well, acknowledge it, and build upon your expertise in that area to improve your overall effort. When you are not doing as well, acknowledge that, and work towards a solution to the more difficult issues. The purpose of this exercise is *not* to grade you or judge your group's effort, but to provide a **basis for reflection and ongoing growth.**

Note for Facilitators: Please emphasize that respondents should pay special attention to the *quality* of the involvement for each question (i.e., they should be doing it *well* in order to respond "Very Much." It is not enough to be simply doing it in a superficial or non-meaningful way). It may also be useful for the facilitator to ask the group the following questions:

1. Who is here today?
2. Who should be here?
3. Are we missing anyone?

Handout 6

Self-Assessment Statements

How much do each of the following statements describe the quality and nature of family involvement in your collaborative or initiative?

	Very Much	Some	Not At All
A. Supporting Involvement			
1. Family and community participants are reimbursed for their time, expenses, and transportation (which is organized and/or provided by the group).	❑	❑	❑
2. We provide or ensure the availability of high-quality, flexible child care that meets the needs of family members, allowing them to participate in meetings and other events.	❑	❑	❑
3. We create opportunities for families to engage in peer networking and support with each other and with staff.	❑	❑	❑
B. Training and Education			
1. We offer training sessions for professionals and families, which are co-facilitated by participants and staff, on how to work collaboratively with each other.	❑	❑	❑
C. Communicating Clearly			
1. We ask for regular feedback from parents about how welcome and comfortable they feel.	❑	❑	❑
2. We make sure that the information we share with families is free of jargon and can be easily understood by all of the participants.	❑	❑	❑
3. Information is provided in all of the languages spoken in our group.	❑	❑	❑
4. We provide relevant information to family participants in a timely manner so that they can prepare for meetings and other events.	❑	❑	❑

	Very Much	Some	Not At All
D. Support from the Top	❑	❑	❑
1. The quality of family involvement (e.g., intensity and meaningfulness of involvement) is one of our measures of program success for evaluation and monitoring.			
2. Our initiative devotes resources, such as money and staff time, to family involvement.	❑	❑	❑
E. Achieving Appropriate Representation and Recruiting Diversity			
1. We recruit and engage families who have not typically been involved in decision-making or other kinds of family involvement.	❑	❑	❑
2. The program participants who are involved in our effort are representative of the larger community in terms of race, culture, language, income, and education.	❑	❑	❑
3. We have strategies for promoting youth involvement as well as parent involvement, trying to ensure that youth have a stake and a voice in areas important to them.	❑	❑	❑
4. Our initiative involves a variety of community members, including representatives from the business, civic, education, and religious sectors.	❑	❑	❑
5. We are successfully involving males in our initiative.	❑	❑	❑

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	Very Much	Some	Not At All
F. Flexibility and Responsiveness			
1. Our meetings and other opportunities for involvement are offered at times and locations that are convenient for family members.	❑	❑	❑
2. Our initiative responds to the concerns of family members with action.	❑	❑	❑
3. We use needs assessments that have been developed in collaboration with families to ensure that our efforts are addressing the issues that are important to the community.	❑	❑	❑
4. We have a flexible involvement policy that allows family members to determine the level and intensity of their involvement.	❑	❑	❑
G. Going Beyond Meetings			
1. Parents participate in the ongoing evaluation and assessment of our initiative.	❑	❑	❑
2. We provide or make available training on leadership and governance for parents.	❑	❑	❑
3. In our initiative, parents participate as paid staff.	❑	❑	❑
4. We encourage and support parents' involvement in community advocacy and leadership efforts beyond our initiative.	❑	❑	❑

	Very Much	Some	Not At All
H. Setting Goals			
1. Families and staff set specific and attainable goals for involving families in the policy-making and decision-making aspects of our initiative.	❑	❑	❑
2. Family members who are involved have clear roles and expectations.	❑	❑	❑
I. Going Beyond Token Involvement			
1. Family members on decision-making bodies have full voting rights.	❑	❑	❑
2. We have at least as many family members as professionals on decision-making bodies.	❑	❑	❑
3. Participants select their own representatives for decision-making bodies.	❑	❑	❑
4. Families have an equal voice in the most important decisions we make, including hiring staff, setting policy directions, and deciding how to spend money.	❑	❑	❑
J. Changing Organizational Attitudes			
1. Family members trust the relationship they have with the professionals in our organization.	❑	❑	❑
2. In our organization, power is shared equally between parents and professionals.	❑	❑	❑
3. The professionals in our organization respect the opinions of family members and work with families to make these recommendations a reality.	❑	❑	❑

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Handout 6

Using Your Self-Assessment:

After completing the self-assessment, consider some of the following questions as you move onto the next stage of prioritizing which areas you will focus on as you proceed with your plans to improve family involvement in your effort:

Which areas are you struggling in?

What can you do to make improvements in these areas?

What do the families in your community say? Have you utilized their suggestions?

What questions do you need to answer from the parents you involve?

What are your strongest areas?

What has allowed you to improve in these areas?

How can you use these strengths to improve the rest of your effort?

What are your top priorities for action?

What are the next immediate steps you can take?

What is your long-term plan for involving families?

Another resource that may be useful in your ongoing work involving families is **Guidelines for Family Support Practice,** the culmination of years of research on the principles and practices behind supportive work with families. Family involvement and community roles are among the many topics addressed in this resource. *Guidelines for Family Support Practice* can be ordered from the Family Resource Coalition, 20 N. Wacker Dr., Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60606, Ph: 312-338-0900, Fax: 312-338-1522. E-MAIL: frca@frca.org

Please help us improve our work by giving us feedback on this self-assessment!
As part of our ongoing learning process, we are very interested in your impressions of this self-assessment and the ways in which it can be used. If you would like additional input on using the self-assessment, or if you have used the self-assessment and have comments, please contact David Diehl of the Family Resource Coalition of America:

Ph: 304-296-3307, Fax: 304-296-2992.

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Case Study 1

Sheri and Shameka

Your community-based health care center is part of a consortium that meets bi-monthly to coordinate activities and share information. The policy of the consortium is that each center must have a consumer and a staff person as representatives. Sheri Harburg, the director of one of the centers, is reluctant to identify a family member from her center to participate in these meetings. She strongly believes that families are too overwhelmed and unprepared to participate effectively. At each meeting, she is openly hostile when the subject is brought up. After some pressure from the other consortium members, she reluctantly asks Ms. Shameka Williams, a young single mother who has a very mild demeanor, to attend the meetings. Shameka is grateful for the help Sheri has provided to her and her son and is willing to do most anything to show her gratitude.

Because Shameka doesn't have a car, Sheri volunteers to drive her to the meetings. Shameka lives near the center so Sheri picks her up on the way to the meetings. She is frequently rushed and arrives late. Shameka doesn't have anyone to watch her young son, Jamal, so she brings him to the meetings where he plays quietly on the floor with his toys and books.

Shameka loves attending the meetings but doesn't understand everything that is discussed. Written materials to help participants prepare for the meetings are sent to each participant prior to the meetings. Shameka's are usually sent to the health center. Sheri gives the materials to Shameka in the car, and Shameka briefly looks them over prior to the meetings. Shameka participates as best she can and thanks Sheri for driving her each time.

After several months, Shameka begins to understand more about the issues. She becomes actively involved in the discussions, contributing valuable information and insights on being a young single mother. Over time, as each meeting approaches, Sheri becomes busier and calls Shameka at the last minute saying she is too busy to come pick her up and that the meetings are in conflict with work she has to do at the health center. After several months, Sheri doesn't call Shameka anymore.

Handout 7

Case Study 2

THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL

The Governor's Council has formed a new 30-member task force to examine issues related to welfare reform in your state. The members of the council represent organizations that provide services to families throughout the state. Because family involvement is a priority for the Governor, the council is mandated to have 20 percent family representation. Arrangements have been made for family members to be reimbursed for all costs associated with participating in the task force, including child care and transportation. Reimbursement checks for these expenses are handled by the staff of the task force.

Most of the professionals appointed to the task force have worked together on other initiatives. Because the Governor wants to make welfare reform an important part of his administration, he has also appointed several high profile state leaders to the task force. To accommodate their schedules, monthly half day meetings will be held in the state. At least once a quarter, the members will participate in a dinner meeting with the full Governor's Council where progress reports and evaluation data are shared. The staff of the task force keep members updated on meeting times and agendas, usually through faxing and phone calls. Much of the business of the task force is conducted by conference call. Staff members for the task force also participate in these phone calls.

The chair of the task force, Dr. Gilman, is charged with selecting the family members to participate. He first selects two family members who are well known as parent activists in the community, Mrs. Guthrie and Mrs. Arnold. Both women serve on a variety of committees and are vocal advocates for women and children in the state. Mrs. Arnold, the wife of a noted physician, is often the chair of the annual charity ball and Mrs. Guthrie is well known for her fundraising activities for the symphony. Although several members of the task force have recommended including family members who have had personal experience with the issues the task force will be addressing, Dr. Gilman is unsuccessful in identifying other participating family members to participate.

Case Study 3

Handout 7

The Job

You work in a community-based family support program that has hired a former client as a parent liaison. The role was created by the director of the program, Wilhemina Jones, as part of a grant she submitted to the federal government. The grant required that the program increase parent involvement. The new position was a total surprise to the staff since they were not involved in writing the grant, designing the role, or in selecting the parent.

The job was not advertised and did not involve a competitive hiring process. Ms. Jones asked Mrs. Ortiz, a client with whom she had a very comfortable relationship to take the position. She was delighted and accepted immediately. The position is for 10 hours per week, Mondays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesdays 5 to 9 p.m., and Thursdays 12 to 2 p.m.

Mrs. Ortiz, who is well liked by the staff, does not have a job description and is unsure what she should do. A staff member, Lyn Allen, asks her to help with family satisfaction surveys, expecting that she will complete the surveys in a few weeks. The surveys require lots of phone contact with family members. Mrs. Ortiz loves making the calls but spends most of the time chatting with families, providing much needed peer support.

After several weeks, Mrs. Ortiz has frequently missed Mondays because of appointments with doctors, school holidays, and therapy sessions. The staff discover that although Mrs. Ortiz is scheduled to work until 9 p.m. on Wednesdays when the program closes, she is leaving at 8 p.m. because her husband objects to her coming home so late.

The staff is concerned about Mrs. Ortiz's declining job performance and approach Ms. Jones, who tells them to handle it themselves because she is very busy writing a grant. They decide to hold a staff meeting to discuss Mrs. Ortiz, but tell her that the meeting is only for professional staff and that she should continue working on the family satisfaction surveys. Mrs. Ortiz knows the meeting is about her and is very upset.

Overhead 1

The old approach to big government picking up the pieces of broken families is giving way to the new idea of strengthening families before they break apart. . . In an era of deficit reduction and reduced budgets for social programs, the family support movement is proving that we can save families and money at the same time. We can no longer afford to neglect families at risk. And investing in families is an investment in our future.

— Walter Cronkite, "Our Families, Our Future." PBS

Family Support Is

- *A Set Of Beliefs And An Approach*
- *A Type Of Grassroots, Community-Based Program*
- *A Shift In Human Services Delivery*
- *A Movement For Social Change*

Overhead 2

Overhead 3

What Makes Family Support Programs Unique?

- *Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.*
- *Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth, and children.*
- *Families are resources to their own members, other families, programs, and communities.*
- *Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.*
- *Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.*
- *Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.*
- *Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.*
- *Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.*
- *Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance, and administration.*

Elements Of Collaboration

Overhead 4

- *Mutual respect for skills and knowledge*
- *Honest and clear communication*
- *Understanding and empathy*
- *Mutually agreed upon goals*
- *Shared planning and decision making*
- *Open and two-way sharing of information*
- *Accessibility and responsiveness*
- *Joint evaluation of progress*
- *Absence of labeling and blaming*

Source: Focal Point, (1987), Vol. 2, No. 2, Research and Training Center, Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University, Portland, OR.

Overhead 5

Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multi-generational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof or many. A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, as permanent as forever. We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support. . .A family is a culture unto itself, with different values and unique ways of realizing its dream; together, our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity. . .Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states and nations.

—*Task Force on Young Children & Families, New Mexico Legislature*

Family Involvement In Formal Support Settings:

A Definition

Any role or activity that enables participating families to have direct and meaningful input into and influence on systems, policies, programs, or practices affecting services or community life for children and families.

Overhead 6

Overhead 7

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ROLES CAN BE . . .

- *Formal/Informal*
- *Spontaneous/Planned*
- *Short-term/Long-term*
- *Paid/Volunteer*

Family Involvement:

Roles For Families

- *Members of task forces*
- *Advisory board members*
- *Program evaluators*
- *Co-trainers for preservice or inservice sessions*
- *Paid program staff*
- *Paid program or policy consultants*
- *Mentors for other families*
- *Grant reviewers*
- *Participants in needs assessment process*
- *Reviewers of audiovisual and written materials*
- *Group facilitators*
- *Witnesses at hearings*
- *Community Advocates*
- *Participants in focus groups*
- *Members of committees hiring new staff*
- *Fund raisers*
- *Members of boards of trustees*
- *Participants at conferences and working meetings*
- *Participants in quality improvement initiatives*

Overhead 8

Overhead 9

Family Involvement: The Benefits For Families

- *improves services for own family*
- *provides opportunity to effect meaningful change*
- *feels good to make a contribution*
- *increases confidence in ability to effect change*
- *makes providers accountable to families*
- *provides opportunities to network with other families and providers*
- *builds knowledge and skills*
- *models community involvement and empowerment for own children and family*
- *creates less passive recipients of care and services*
- *makes things better for other families*
- *opens doors to employment*
- *creates a sense of belonging*
- *offers a sense of accomplishment*
- *increases sense of personal power*
- *offers leadership role models for other families*

Family Involvement: The Benefits For Providers, Staff, or Legislators

- *enhances relationships between families and providers*
- *enhances providers ability to do their job (e.g.; producing healthier children and families)*
- *develops providers' knowledge and skills*
- *increases responsiveness to family-identified needs*
- *provides a reality check for legislators, providers, and staff*
- *develops fresh perspective on how services should be delivered*
- *increases empathy and understanding of families*
- *shares responsibility*
- *increases providers' efficiency and cost effectiveness*
- *helps providers link with other families*
- *builds an advocacy base*
- *strengthens accountability from service providers*

Overhead 10

Overhead 11

Family Involvement: The Benefits For Communities, Programs, Or Agencies

- *improves quality of programs and services*
- *increases responsiveness of programs and policies*
- *keeps programs relevant and realistic*
- *brings fresh perspectives, creative solutions, limitless creativity*
- *increases visibility of and respect for program in community*
- *increases cohesiveness and collaboration between agencies*
- *helps save $$, reduces waste*
- *improves ability to accomplish mission*
- *develops a constituency that can advocate for program/agency*
- *increases appreciation of various cultures*
- *contributes to the stability of the community*